REVIEW.

The Protector; a Vindication. By J. H. Merle d'Aubigné. Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd. London: Simpkin and Marshall. 1849.

To be misunderstood and misrepresented is the common lot of men much raised above their fellows. Envy follows eminence as the shadow follows the sun; and envy, open-eyed to every defect, is blind to every merit.

Few greater men have lived in modern times than England's once feared and honoured Protector, Oliver Cromwell; and upon few reputations has the tooth of envy and hatred fastened with more venomous and lasting fang. Many circumstances have contributed to this. He was, not by choice but by necessity, a Republican, and monarchy is deeply enshrined in the English heart. He laid low a proud and dominant church, and stabled the horses of his victorious troops in her cathedrals. This the National Establishment can never forget or forgive. He helped to depose and put to death the King—a crime never to be justified or palliated, though Charles I. was one of the most faithless and worthless monarchs that ever swayed the English sceptre. He defeated and put to flight, on the plains of Worcester, that profligate prince, Charles II., a name never to be mentioned without abhorrence by every lover of liberty, hater of hypocrisy, upholder of morality, and friend of religion. But above all, he was a Puritan, and a professor, we would hope, a possessor of vital godliness. To political enmity, therefore, against him as a usurper, there has been added the deeper-seated and more enduring religious enmity against him as a saint.

But the same causes which made Cromwell's name abhorred by a Tory church and a profligate court have also handed down his character to posterity blackened by prejudice and overwhelmed with calumny. When death, amidst the tears and prayers of thousands,* had stopped that noble heart, and for ever paralysed that mighty hand, and Charles II. was restored to the throne, it was the interest of every hireling scribe to blacken the character and pour contempt upon the memory of that great man, whose very name had made the foes of England tremble.† Every ass could now kick the dead lion. Every dangling courtier had his gibe and jest at the stern Puritan who had chased away such profligates as the eagle drives

* "The sorrow of the Protector's friends and of the majority of the nation cannot be described. 'The consternation and astonishment of all people,' wrote Fauconberg to Henry Cromwell, 'are inexpressible; their hearts seem as if sunk within them.' * * * * 'I am not able to speak or write,' said Thurloe; 'this stroke is so sore, so unexpected, the providence of God in it so stupendous, considering the person that has fallen, the time, the season wherein God took him away, with other circumstances, I can do nothing but put my mouth in the dust and say, It is the Lord. It is not to be said what affliction the army and people show to his late Highness; his name is already precious. Never was there any man so prayed for.'"

† Cardinal Mazarin, the powerful minister of Louis XIV., is said to have changed countenance whenever the name of Cromwell was mentioned in his presence.

before him a flock of hungry vultures. But scoffing jests were not the only insults offered to his memory. Not content with blackening his name, they must needs insult his remains. His very corpse they dragged out of the grave, hanged it at Tyburn, and threw it into a hole dug under the gallows. His religion they called fanaticism, his letters and speeches cant, his assuming the reins of government when no one else could hold them rebellion, and his prayers and tears hypocrisy. Every mercenary writer and court preacher curried favour by ridiculing the words and actions of the man who had purged the church of erroneous and immoral ministers, selected for his bosom friends and associates those alone who feared God, put down with a strong hand balls and theatres, and assembled in Parliament men whose chief qualification was the possession of inward grace. Oxford could not forgive a ruler who had made Dr. Owen Dean of Christ Church and Vice-Chancellor of the University, and Dr. Goodwin President of Magdalen; who had chosen his chaplains for their spiritual gifts; and who, in seasons of difficulty and trial, instead of consulting his cabinet, had sought the Lord with tears and supplications. These, in their eyes, unpardonable sins were not redeemed or counterbalanced by his making the name of England universally feared and honoured, by the stop he put to the victorious progress of France and Spain, or by the protection he afforded to the Protestants abroad, when he compelled the French minister to cast his shield over the very men for whom he had been whetting the sword.

The impressions of most persons as regards our Puritan ancestors have been formed from reading shallow histories, written by the infidel Hume or the hired scribbler, Goldsmith; and as these impressions are usually made in tender, unreflecting years, and are well suited to the carnal mind of youth, they become grounded in the memory as certain fixed truths. We have been taught at school to believe that Cromwell was a hypocrite and fanatic, because so we have read in Pinnock's Goldsmith. Here most persons' knowledge of the life and character of Cromwell begins and ends. Access to sounder sources of information few possess, or indeed care about. All that has been written of him by Owen, Baxter, Milton, Mrs. Hutchinson, &c., all the evidence derivable from his letters and speeches, the minute account still extant of his last illness and death-bed, and almost every other source from whence to form a sound judgment of his character, is to most, even educated, persons, unknown, and it is handed down from father to son as a most certain truth, that as Charles I. was a martyr, and is gone to heaven, so Oliver Cromwell was a hypocrite, and is gone to hell.

Without attempting to vindicate all the actions of Cromwell, yet one thing we may safely assert, that to him, more than to any other man, does England owe her present civil and religious liberty. That England is not a Popish country, that the Sovereign is not absolute, that the press is free, that Parliament meets, that we can assemble ourselves peaceably together to worship God in spirit and in truth, that the Bible may be circulated and read—in other words, that England is not

now a second Spain, Italy, or Portugal, is due, under God, mainly to Oliver Cromwell. What is called by church historians the Great Rebellion, was, in fact, a rising of English liberty against a vast conspiracy to make England a Popish country, and the monarch an absolute despot. Charles I. had married a Popish princess, a daughter of France, and there was a deep-laid plot to overthrow English liberty and English Protestantism. This conspiracy, hatched by Jesuits abroad, and to be supported by all the power of France, was, under God, defeated by the resistance of our Puritan ancestors. But however stout their hearts, or strong their hands, they wanted a guiding head. This Cromwell furnished them with. It was he who enlisted under his banner such soldiers as the world never saw before or since. "How can we be otherwise than beaten?" said he to Hampden. "Your troops are many of them old decayed serving-men and tapsters, and such kind of fellows; and theirs are gentlemen's sons, younger sons, and persons of quality. But I will remedy that. I will raise men who have the fear of God before their eyes, and who will bring some conscience to what they do; and I promise you they shall not be beaten." He was as good as his word, and enlisted in the eastern counties the young freeholders in whose hearts he believed the fear of God was. John Bunyan was one of these soldiers, and shouldered his musket at the gates of Leicester. These were the men who, at their watch-fires, read their little Bibles, or engaged in prayer alone or with each other, or sang their hymns and psalms, or listened to the sermons of their preachers, or conferred with each other on points of doctrine or experience. These were hailed with joy wherever they went, for they protected the widow and the orphan, scrupulously paid for all the food and forage which they required, and put down with a strong hand oppression and violence.

With these views and feelings, which we have long entertained respecting Oliver Cromwell, we acknowledge ourselves to have been much interested in the work at the head of the present article.

Dr. Merle d'Aubigné is favourably known in this country as the author of the best account of the Reformation in Germany and Switzerland which has yet appeared. Deeply struck with the original letters and other documents relating to Oliver Cromwell which Mr. Carlyle has published, and experiencing thereby a thorough revolution in his own views concerning him, he felt desirous to communicate similar impressions to others. He thus writes:

"I am well aware that the task I have undertaken is a difficult one. We have so deeply imbibed, in early youth, the falsehoods set forth by Cromwell's enemies, that they have become in our eyes indisputable truths. I know it by my own experience, by the lengthened resistance which I made to the light that has recently sprung up and illuminated, as with a new day, the obscure image of one of the greatest men of modern times. It was only after deep consideration that I submitted to the evidence of irresistible facts."

We have seen no work which gives so complete an account of the Protector, or which furnishes so much original and authentic evidence of his real character. He does not vindicate all Cromwell's

actions, but he has shown, and we think satisfactorily, that what is called his ambition, and his mounting from step to step, till at last he ruled England with absolute sway, was in him not a matter of crafty and deliberate policy, but the force of unavoidable and uncontrollable circumstances. The struggle between the Parliament and the King was for life or death. If Charles prevailed, all civil liberty was at an end, and with the loss of civil, was involved the overthrow of all religious liberty. Nor was there hope of peace, for Charles was so thoroughly faithless to his word, that no stipulations or promises, oaths or treaties, could bind him. This, then, was Cromwell's unhappy position; we say unhappy, because he was forced by it into actions which must have grieved and wounded his conscience. When once he had drawn the sword, the question with him was this, "Shall I withdraw, or go on? If I withdraw, the cause is ruined. Not only I myself, but thousands of the Lord's people, must perish; tyranny will prevail, Popery triumph, the gospel be extinguished, and the blood of the saints be shed like water. If I go on, I may establish civil and religious liberty on a firm basis." We who, in the days of general liberty, sit under the shade of our own vine and fig tree, which were watered with the blood of our suffering forefathers, are very imperfect judges of the motives, feelings, and actions of men like Cromwell. Nor can we enter into his peculiar temptations and the perplexing difficulties of his position. He was fighting, as he believed, for the cause of God's saints. To abandon them would be to abandon the cause of God. Thus was he led on from one step to another, till at last it came to this point, that unless he took the reins of government, anarchy and confusion would reign in the land, evil men would have full license, property would perish, law would cease, and the whole kingdom be overrun with crime and violence. Any government is better than no government; and one government was alone practicable after the death of the King—the government of the army. And if this were indispensable, where was the arm that could wield that sword with such skill, power, and moderation as his? It would have been far better for him quietly to have lived and died on his farm at Huntingdon, to have strayed by the banks of the sluggish Ouse in prayer and meditation, and been gathered to his fathers without one drop of blood in his hand. But this he could not do. Like a man who incautiously enters a broad and rapid river, he had to swim for his life. The shore he had left he could no longer regain, but must now breast the waves which carried him by main force along whither he would not.

Unless we understand and bear in mind the circumstances of the times, and his peculiar position, we cannot enter into the character of Cromwell, and are most imperfect judges of his conduct and actions. The King was a faithless tyrant, besotted by love to a Popish wife, who was in league with France, and whose every movement was directed by the Jesuits. The Cavaliers, his soldiers, were a profligate, debauched set, atheistic in sentiment and dissolute in life; his counsellors were either semi-Papists, like

Laud, or violent and tyrannical, like Strafford. No promises could bind such a King. Restore him to power, he would use it to crush all liberty. On the other side was every principle and feeling dear to Cromwell's heart: his country's ancient liberties, the cause of vital godliness, the free conscience of the saints—at last his own life, and with that the lives of thousands. Where was he to stop? Instead of considering his misdeeds, consider his temptations, his peculiar position, the circumstances of the period. Consider, too, the largeness of his mind, the far-seeing views which he had, the universal deference paid to his opinions, and the critical conjunctures wherein, if he had not acted, all would have been lost. Consider, too, the use he made of his power when attained. How tolerant to all parties, how moral and religious his court, how unassuming his demeanour! Such a period as Cromwell's brief reign England never before saw, and has never since seen. Never were vice and immorality so put down, never was the gospel so widely preached, never did religion so prevail, and we may add, never did England stand higher among the nations, never was she more honoured, never more feared.

But we have dwelt so long upon the external circumstances of Cromwell's character, that we have left ourselves no space for our main object—the consideration of him in a religious point of view. We must, therefore, defer this view of our subject to a following Number, concluding, for the present, with a letter which we think will surprise some who have no other idea of Cromwell than a soldier or a usurper:

"To my beloved Cousin, Mrs. St. John, at Sir William Masham his house, called Otes, in Essex:

"Present these.

"Dear Cousin,—I thankfully acknowledge your love in your kind remembrance of me upon this opportunity. Alas! you do too highly prize my lines and my company. I may be ashamed to own your expressions, considering how unprofitable I am, and the mean improvement of my talent.

"Yet to honour my God, by declaring what he hath done for my soul, in this I am confident, and I will be so. Truly, then, this I find, that he giveth springs in a dry, barren wilderness, where no water is. I live, you know where—in Meshec, which they say signifies '*Prolonging;*' in Kedar, which signifies '*Blackness;*' yet the Lord forsaketh me not. Though he do prolong, yet he will, I trust, bring me to his tabernacle, to his resting-place. My soul is with the congregation of the first-born, my body rests in hope; and if here I may honour my God, either by doing or by suffering, I shall be most glad. Truly no poor creature hath more cause to put himself forth in the cause of his God than I. I have had plentiful wages beforehand; and I am sure I shall never earn the least mite. The Lord accept me in his Son, and give me to walk in the light, and give us to walk in the light, as he is in the light! He it is that enlighteneth our blackness, our darkness. I dare not say he hideth his face from me. He giveth me to see light in his light. One beam in a dark place hath much refreshment in it; blessed be his name for shining upon so dark a heart as mine! You know what my manner of life hath been. O I lived in and loved darkness, and hated light! I was a chief, the chief of sinners. This is true. I hated godliness, yet God had mercy on me. O the riches of his mercy! Praise him for me; pray for me, that he who hath begun a good work would perfect it in the day of Christ.

"Salute all my friends in that family whereof you are yet a member. I

am much bound unto them for their love. I bless the Lord for them; and that my son, by their procurement, is so well. Let him have your prayers, your counsel; let me have them.

"Salute your husband and sister from me; he is not a man of his word! He promised to write about Mr. Wrath, of Epping; but as yet I receive no letters. Put him in mind to do what with conveniency may be done for the poor cousin I did solicit him about.

"Once more farewell. The Lord be with you; so prayeth,

"Your truly loving cousin,

"Ely, 13th October, 1638." "OLIVER CROMWELL.

POETRY.

LINES ON THE DEATH OF THE LATE R. PAPWORTH, SUGGESTED WHEN MEDITATING ON HIS ETERNAL BLESSEDNESS.

The spirit has left its frail cottage of clay,
For the mansions of light and the regions of day;
It has entered that city of which we are told
That its gates are of pearl and its pavement of gold.

With the crown on his brow, and the palm in his hands,
A conqueror, and more than a conqueror, he stands;
The extent of his rapture no soul can compute,
For he harps with a harp that shall never be mute.

A little we know of the song that he sings,
For we heard him essay it while pluming his wings;
He lisped it among us, ere taking his flight
To the church of the first-born, the children of light.

'Twas of love everlasting, immutable, free,
That first shone on a worm so unworthy as he;
And the blood of the Lamb he delighted to tell
Had absolved him from sin and redeemed him from hell.

The strains were immortal, though mingled with earth,
And he struggled with weakness in giving them birth.
But now he partakes of that fulness of joy,
Where the wine has no mixture, the gold no alloy.

Nor sickness, nor sorrow, nor bondage, nor fears,
Nor sin that has ravaged this valley of tears,
Shall ever intrude on the ransomed above,
Arrayed in white robes, and made perfect in love.

No night shall be there, nor a cloud intervene;
While the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall be seen.
But the height of that bliss is beyond all compare;
For what heart can conceive of the happiness there?

Godmanchester. W. B.

He that owns not God's hand in every dispensation, disowns his sovereignty; and he that repines denies his righteousness.—*E. Coles.*

True faith fixes on God's word in all its distresses. Whatever, says the soul, be my state and condition, whatever be my fears and perplexities, whatever oppositions I meet withal, yet I see in Jesus Christ, in the glass of the gospel, that there is no inconsistency between the glory of God and my salvation; that otherwise insuperable difficulty, laid by the law in the way of my life and comfort, is entirely removed.—*Owen.*